—stranger than any I had envisaged in *The Thirties*—a moment of unique tragedy coincided with some of the most shallow and fatuous hopes ever to be entertained by mortal men. Prosperity was to broaden down from hire-purchase payment to hire-purchase payment; the birth-pill would safeguard the pursuit of happiness against aJl impediments, and with the Gross National Product continually expanding, a dazzling prospect of ever-lasting felicity opened before mankind. As the psychiatric wards went on multiplying, suicide and crime increasing, the con-sumption of pills-for-all-purposes mounting, there was pro-claimed with ever greater fervour the coming to pass of a kingdom of heaven on earth, richer, more easeful and blissful than any hitherto known.

So now, looking back from the second half of the sixties, I feel that, after all, the assumptions and prognostications of *The Thirties* were not so wide of the mark as might previously have seemed to be the case. Though we were technically among the victors in the 1939-45 $^{war}>$ ^{our} participation in the victory was purely nominal. It was our positively last appearance in a major role on the stage of history, as Churchill was our last international star. He and our imperial destiny expired together; at his funeral, both were interred, making of it a great national occasion. As everyone realised, consciously or unconsciously, for us as a people it was the end of such occasions. There would never be another at all comparable. So the most was made of it

The Empire, which theoretically emerged larger

and stronger than ever from the 1914-18 war, was in fact even then in an advanced state of decomposition, and went on subsequently decomposing fast. Victory in 1945 did not invalidate my observation in *The Thirties* that the sun seemed to be setting on the Empire on which it never set- Churchill proclaimed indignantly that he had not been appointed by King George VI to be his principal Secretary of State in order to preside over the dissolution of his Empire. Had he but known it, this, precisely, was to be required of him in his confused and inglorious premiership in